اِنَّ ۙ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَ ٰهِ لِلَّتِى ىَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِ نَ الَّذِ نَ يَعْمَلُ نَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَ بِرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 18-Al-Kahf

سُ وْرَا كْ فِ مَكِّيَّ

بِ سْمِ اللّٰ الرَّ حْمٰنِ الرَّ حِ مِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰ ۙ الَّذِ اَ نْزَلَ عَلٰى عَبْدِ الْكِتٰبَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا ؕ ١

(18-1) Praise be to Allah Who has revealed to His servant the Book devoid of all crookedness; (1)

(1) That is, there is nothing intricate or complicated in it that may be beyond anyone's understanding nor is there anything that deviates from the straight path of the truth and thus cause hesitation in the mind of a truth loving person.

قَيِّمًا لِّيُ نْذِرَ بَ سًا شَدِ دًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَ يُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِ نَ الَّذِ نَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَ هُمْ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ؕ ٢

(18-2) an unerringly Straight Book, meant to warn of a stern punishment from Allah, and to proclaim, to those who believe and work righteous deeds, the tiding that theirs shall be a good reward

مَّاكِثِ نَ فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ؕ ٣

(18:3) wherein they shall abide for ever;

وَّ يُ نْذِرَ الَّذِ نَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ۟ ٤ ؕ

(18-4) and also to warn those who say: "Allah has taken to Himself a son," (2)

(2) "Those who say" includes the Christians, the Jews and the mushrik Arabs who assigned offspring to Allah.

(18-5) a thing about which they have no knowledge, [3] neither they nor their ancestors. Dreadful is the word that comes out of their mouths. What they utter is merely a lie.

(3) “Dreadful is the word” That one is the son of God, or Allah has adopted that one as a son. This has been declared to be dreadful because it was not based o any knowledge that Allah has a son or has adopted a son. They had merely exaggerated their love for someone and invented such a relationship. And they do not realize that it is a dreadful blasphemy, impudence and fabrication that they are uttering in regards to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

فَلَعَلَّكَ بٰخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَسَفًا ۝

(18-6) (O Muhammad), if they do not believe in this Message, [4] you will perhaps torment yourself to death with grief, sorrowing over them.

(4) This refers to the real cause of the anxiety of the Prophet (peace be upon him) at the time of the revelation of this Surah. It clearly shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not grieve at the persecution from which he and his companions were suffering but at the deviation and moral degeneration of his people. What was consuming him was that, though he was trying to bring them out from their disgraceful state, they persisted in it. He was grieved because he was convinced that their deviation would inevitably lead them to destruction and scourge of Allah. Therefore he was working day and night to save them but it appeared that they were bent upon incurring the chastisement of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has described this state of his mind in a tradition to this effect: I may describe this thing in a parable. A person kindled a fire to spread light but the moths persist in falling over it to burn themselves alive. He tries to save them from the fire but the moths reduce his efforts to failure. The same is true of me and you. I hold you by your skirts to keep you away from the fire, but you are bent upon falling into it. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Though apparently it is merely stated that it may be that you will consume your life for their sake out of sorrow, it also contains a sort of consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: As you are not responsible for forcing them to believe, why should you consume yourself for their sake. Your only duty is to give good news and warning and not to turn people into believers. Therefore, you may go on carrying out your mission of giving good news to the believers and warning of the bad consequences to the disbelievers.

اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْاَرْضِ زِ ينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۝٧

(18-7) Surely We have made all that is on the earth an embellishment for it in order to test people as to who of them is better in conduct.

وَ اِنَّا لَجٰعِلُوْ نَ مَا عَلَيْ ہَا صَعِيْدًا جُرُزًا ۝٨

(18-8) In the ultimate, We shall reduce all that is on the earth to a barren plain. (5)

(5) (Ayat 6)was addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but (Ayats 7-8) have been directed to the disbelievers indirectly, as if to say: You must understand it clearly that all the things that you see in the world and which allure you, are a transitory adornment which has been arranged merely to test you, but it is a pity that you have been involved in the misunderstanding that all these things have been created to cater for your pleasure and enjoyment. That is why the only aim and object of life you have set before you is: Eat, drink and be merry. As a result of this you do not pay any attention to your true and real well wisher. You must understand it well that these things have not been provided for pleasure but are actually a means of testing you. You have been placed among them to see which of you is allured by these from the real aim of life and which of you keeps steadfast in the worship of Allah, for which you have been sent to the world. All these things and means of pleasure shall come to an end on the Day, your examination is over and nothing

will remain on the earth because it will be turned into a bare plain.

اَمْ حَسِبْتَ اَنَّ اَصْحٰبَ الْكَهْفِ وَ الرَّقِيْمِ كَانُوْا مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا عَجَبًا ۝٩

(18-9) Do you think that the people of the Cave (6) and the Inscription (7) were one of Our wondrous signs? (8)

(6) The Arabic word Kahf literally means a vast cave.

(7) There is a difference of opinion about the meaning of arraqim. Some companions and their followers opined that it was the name of that habitation where this event took place and that it was situated somewhere between Aylah and Palestine. There are other commentators who take it to mean the inscription that had been set up at the cave as a memorial to the sleepers of the cave. Abul Kalam Azad, in his commentary, Tarjmanul-Quran, has preferred the first meaning and opined that it is the same place which has been called Rekem in the Bible (Joshua, 18: 27). Then he identifies it with the ancient historical city of Petra. But he has not considered the fact that Rekem, as mentioned in the Bible, belonged to the children of Benjamin and according to the Book of Joshua, the territory of this clan was situated to the west of river Jordan and the Dead Sea and that the ruins of Petra are situated to the south of Jordan. That is why the modern archaeologists do not believe that Petra and Rekem are one and the same place. (Please refer to Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946, Vol XVII, page 658). We are also of the opinion that by Arraqim is meant the inscription.

(8) This question has been posed to expose the skeptical attitude of the disbelievers towards the “Sleepers of the Cave,” as if to say: Do you think that Allah, Who has created the heavens and the earth, does not have the power to keep a few persons in a state of sleep for a couple of hundred years and then to raise them up same as they were at the time of going to sleep. If you ever had pondered over the wonderful creation of the sun and the moon and the earth, you would never have expressed any doubt that such a thing was anything difficult for Allah.

إِذْ اَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ اِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا اٰتِنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَّهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ اَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

(18-10) When those youths sought refuge in the Cave and said: "Our Lord! Grant us mercy from Yourself and provide for us rectitude in our affairs."

فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِى الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا ﴿١١﴾

(18-11) We lulled them to sleep in that cave for a number of years

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ اَىُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ اَحْصٰى لِمَا لَبِثُوْٓا اَمَدًا ﴿١٢﴾

(18-12) and then roused them so that We might see which of the two parties could best tell the length of their stay.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ اِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ اٰمَنُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنٰهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾

(18-13) We narrate to you their true story. [9] They were a party of young men who had faith in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance [10]

(9) The oldest evidence of this story is found in a homily written in Syriac by Jacob of Sarug, a Christian priest of Syria, who was born in A.D. 452, a few years after the death of the companions of the cave. The homily which describes the legend in great detail was composed by him in or about A.D. 474. On the one hand, this same Syriac version came into the hands of our early commentators, and Ibn Jarir Tabari cited it in his commentary with various authorities. And on the other hand, it reached Europe where its translations and abridged versions were published in Greek and Latin. The abridged story as told by Gibbon in Chapter 33 of his The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire under the heading, “The Seven Sleepers”, so closely resembles the story told by our commentators that both the versions seem to have been drawn from the same source. For instance, the name of the king, whose persecutions made the Seven Christian youths of Ephesus take refuge in the cave, was

Emperor Decius according to Gibbon. He ruled the Roman Empire from A.D. 249 to 251 and whose reign is very notorious because of his persecution of the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), while our commentators call him Decanus or Decaus, etc. The city, where this event happened was Aphesus or Aphesos according to our commentators, while according to Gibbon it was Ephesus, which was the biggest Roman city and seaport on the west coast of Asia Minor. The ruins of this city can still be seen 20 to 25 miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmir. Again the name of the king, during whose reign the companions of the cave awoke, was Tezusius according to the Muslim commentators and Theodosius II according to Gibbon. He ruled over Rome from A.D. 408 to 450, after the Roman Empire had accepted Christianity.

The resemblance between the two versions is so close that even the name of the companion whom the sleepers sent to the city to buy food after waking up has been mentioned as Jamblicha by the Muslim scholars and Jamblichus by Gibbon. The details of the story in both the versions are also similar which are briefly as follows.

When during the reign of the Emperor Decius, the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) were being mercilessly persecuted, the seven Christian youths hid themselves in a cave and fell into a sleep. Then in the 38th year of the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II (approximately in A.D. 445 or 446) they awoke when the entire Roman Empire had become Christian. Thus, they slept in the cave for nearly 196 years.

On this ground some orientalists have rejected that the above mentioned story is the same as that given in the Quran because the period of their stay in the cave according to the Quran (Ayat 25) was 309 years. We have, however, answered this objection in (E.N. 25).

There are a few minor differences between the Quranic and Syriac versions, on the basis of which Gibbon has charged the Prophet (peace be upon him) with ignorance. However, the Syriac

version, on the basis of whose authenticity he has committed this gross insolence, was even according to him written thirty to forty years after the event by a Syrian. He has not taken the trouble to consider the fact that verbal versions of events do change a bit during such a long time while they are communicated from one country to the other. Therefore it is wrong to take such a version of the story for granted and literally true and to charge the Quran with discrepancy for any main difference with it. Such an attitude is worthy only of those people who are so blinded by religious prejudices that they discard even the most ordinary demands of reason.

The city of Ephesus where the event of the sleepers of the cave took place, was built about 11th century B.C. and became a great center of idol worship, its chief deity being the moon goddess, Diana, whose temple was regarded as a wonder of the ancient world. Most of her devotees belonged to Asia Minor and the Roman Empire also had accepted her as one of its deities. After Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) when his message started reaching different parts of the Roman Empire, a few youths of Ephesus also gave up idol worship and accepted God as their only Lord. Gregory of Tours has collected details about these Christian youths in his Meraculorum Liber, which are briefly as follows.

They were seven youths. When the Emperor Decius heard of their change of faith, he summoned them and questioned them about their new religion. In spite of knowing that the Emperor was deadly against the followers of Christ, they frankly admitted before him that their Lord is the Lord of the earth and heavens, and that they recognized none else as Deity for if they did so, they would be committing a grave sin. The Emperor became furious to hear this, and warned that he would have them killed, but then considering their tender age, he granted them three days in which they were counseled to revert to their old faith, otherwise they would be put to death.

The seven youths took advantage of the situation and fled the city to conceal themselves in a cave in the mountains. On

the way a dog also followed them. They did their best to scare it away, but it would not leave them. At last they found a spacious cave as a suitable refuge and hid in it and the dog sat at the entrance. Being tired they soon fell into a deep slumber. This happened in about 250 A.D. After about 197 years, in 447 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II, they awoke suddenly when the whole Roman Empire had embraced Christianity and the Ephesians had given up idolatry.

At this time a fierce controversy was going on among the Romans regarding the reality of the life after death and Resurrection, and the Emperor himself was anxious to eradicate somehow the disbelief in the life after death from the minds of his people. So much so that one day he prayed that God in His mercy may show a sign which may help restore and correct the people's belief. In precisely the same days the seven sleepers awoke in the cave.

After waking up, the youths started asking one another about how long they might have slept. Some said it might have been a day, others said it was a part of a day. When they reached no conclusion, they stopped arguing, leaving the knowledge of the exact period to God.

Then they sent Jean, a companion, to the city with a few silver coins to buy food, and warned him to be on his guard lest the people should recognize him, for they feared that if they were discovered the Ephesians would force them to bow before Diana. But when Jean came to the city he was astonished to see that the world had changed. The entire population had embraced Christianity, and there was nobody in the city to worship Diana. He came to a shop and wanted to buy a few loaves of bread. When he paid in a coin bearing the image of Emperor Decius, the shopkeeper could not believe his eyes and asked the stranger from where he had obtained that coin. When the young man said that it was his own, a dispute began between them and soon a crowd gathered around them, and the matter reached the chief officer of the city. The officer himself was puzzled and wanted to know the whereabouts of the treasure house from where the

young man had taken the coin, but the latter insisted that it belonged to him. The officer did not believe him because he thought that a young man like him could not possibly possess a centuries old coin which had not even been seen by the elders in the city. When Jean came to know that the Emperor Decius had died, he was pleasantly surprised. He told the crowd that he and his six companions had fled the city only the other day and taken refuge in a cave to escape Decius' persecution. The officer was greatly surprised and followed the young man to see the cave where his companions lay in hiding. And a great crowd followed behind them. When they came to the cave, it was fully established that the youths really belonged to the Emperor Decius' period. Consequently, Emperor Theodosius was informed and he also visited the cave to receive grace. Then the seven youths went back into the cave and lay down and breathed their last. Seeing this clear sign the people's belief in the life after death was restored, and a monument was ordered to be built over the cave by the Emperor.

The story of the sleepers of the cave as narrated above, corresponds so closely with that mentioned in the Quran that the seven youths can easily be regarded as Ashab-i- Kahf (the companions of the cave). Some people, however, have raised the objection that this story concerns a city of Asia Minor, and the Quran does not discuss or refer to any event that might have taken place outside Arabia, therefore it would be against the Quranic style and spirit to label this Christian story as the story of Ashab-i-Kahf. In our opinion this objection is not correct. The Quran means to impress and warn the Arabs by relating stories concerning the various ancient tribes who had transgressed from the right path and with whom they were familiar, whether they lived and flourished inside Arabia or outside it. It is for this very reason that a mention has been made of the ancient history of Egypt in the Quran, whereas Egypt has never been a part of Arabia. The question is that when the history of Egypt can be mentioned in the Quran, why cannot Rome and the Roman history with which the Arabs were as familiar as with the Egyptian history? The Roman frontiers adjoined the northern Hijaz and the Arab caravans traded with the Romans almost throughout the

year. Then there were a number of Arab tribes who were directly under Roman domination and the Roman Empire was in no way unknown to the Arabs, a fact which is fully borne out by Surah Ar-Room. Another thing which should be borne in mind is that the story of the sleepers of the cave has been related in the Quran in response to a query raised by the disbelievers of Makkah, who had been prompted by the Jews and Christians to question the Prophet (peace be upon him) on such matters as were wholly unknown to the Arabs in order to test his Prophethood.

(10) That is, when they had believed sincerely, Allah increased their faith in the guidance and enabled them to become firm and steadfast on the way of the truth even at the risk of their lives rather than surrender before falsehood.

وَّ رَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ لَنَدْعُوَاۡ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖۤ اِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَاۤ اِذًا شَطَطًا ﴿۱۴﴾

(18-14) and strengthened their hearts when they stood up and proclaimed: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We shall call upon no other god beside Him; (for if we did so), we shall be uttering a blasphemy."

هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اٰلِهَةً ؕ لَوْ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍۢ بَيِّنٍ ؕ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ﴿۱۵﴾

(18-15) (Then they conferred among themselves and said): "These men, our own people, have taken others as gods beside Him: why do they not bring any clear evidence that they indeed are gods? Who can be more unjust than he who foists a lie on Allah?

وَ اِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوْهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَاْوٗۤا اِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَ يُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَمْرِكُمْ مِّرْفَقًا ﴿۱۶﴾

(18-16) And now that you have dissociated yourselves from them and from whatever they worship beside Allah, go and

seek refuge in the Cave. (11) Your Lord will extend His mercy to you and will provide for you the means for the disposal of your affairs."

(11) When these God worshiping youths fled the habitations to take refuge in the hills, the city of Ephesus was the principal center of idol worship and sorcery in Asia Minor. There was a great temple dedicated to the goddess Diana, which was well known in the whole world and attracted devotees from far places. The sorcerers, workers of magic and occult arts, soothsayers and amulet writers of Ephesus were well known and their black business had spread throughout Syria and Palestine, even as far as Egypt. The Jews also had a big share in it, who attributed this art to Prophet Solomon. (Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature under Ephesus). The predicament in which the righteous people living in an environment of idolatry and superstition were involved can well be imagined from the remark of the companions of the cave that occurs in (Ayat 20): If they succeed in over powering us, they will surely stone us to death or force us back into their faith.

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ اِذَا طَلَعَت تَّزٰوَرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَ اِذَا غَرَبَت تَّقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِيْ فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا ﴿١٧﴾

(18-17) Had you seen them in the Cave (12) it would have appeared to you that when the sun rose, it moved away from their Cave to the right; and when it set, it turned away from them to the left, while they remained in a spacious hollow in the Cave. (13) This is one of the Signs of Allah. Whomsoever Allah guides, he alone is led aright; and whomsoever Allah lets go astray, you will find for him no guardian to direct him.

(12) It has not been mentioned that in accordance with this mutual resolve, they left the city and went to a secret cave in the mountains in order to escape from death or forced apostasy.

(13) This is to show that the mouth of the cave faced the north. That is why the light of the sun could not enter inside the

cave and the one who passed by it could not see who was inside it.

وَ تَحْسَبُهُمْ اَيْقَاظًا وَّهُمْ رُقُوْدٌ ۚ وَّ نُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ ۚ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيْدِ ؕ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَّ لَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا ؕ ١٨

(18-18) On seeing them you would fancy them to be awake though they were asleep; and We caused them to turn their sides to their right and to their left, (14) and their dog sat stretching out its forelegs on the threshold of the Cave. Had you looked upon them you would have certainly fled away from them, their sight filling you with terror. (15)

(14) That is, if someone could have looked at the seven persons from outside and seen them turning from one side to the other at intervals, he would have thought that they were not asleep but were relaxing themselves.

(15) Allah had so arranged their refuge that none dared go inside the cave and know about them for it was pitch dark in the cave and the dog was keeping watch at the entrance. If someone ever looked into the cave and saw the sleepers, he took them for some robbers and at once turned on his heels. This was the reason why their refuge remained a secret to the outer world for such a long period.

وَكَذٰلِكَ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِيَتَسَآءَلُوْا بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ؕ قَالُوْا رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ؕ فَابْعَثُوْۤا اَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هٰذِهٖۤ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ اَيُّهَاۤ اَزْكٰى طَعَامًا فَلْيَاْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ اَحَدًا ؕ ١٩

(18-19) Likewise, We roused them (16) in a miraculous way that they might question one another. One of them asked: "How long did you remain (in this state)?" The others said: "We remained so for a day or part of a day." Then they said: "Your Lord knows better how long we remained in this state. Now send one of you to the city with this coin of yours and let him see who

has the best food, and let him buy some provisions from there. Let him be cautious and not inform anyone of our whereabouts.

(16) They were awakened from their sleep in the same miraculous way that was employed in sending them to sleep and keeping them hidden from the outer world.

إِنَّهُمْ إِن يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَن تُفْلِحُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

(18-20) For if they should come upon us, they will stone us to death or force us to revert to their faith whereafter we shall never prosper."

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا ۚ إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُنْيَانًا ۖ رَّبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا ﴿٢١﴾

(18-21) Thus did We make their case known to the people of the city (17) so that they might know that Allah's promise is true, and that there is absolutely no doubt that the Hour will come to pass. (18) But instead of giving thought to this, they disputed with one another concerning the People of the Cave, some saying: "Build a wall over them. (19) Their Lord alone knows best about them." But those who prevailed over their affairs (20) said: "We shall build a place of worship over them." (21)

(17) The secret of their sleep was revealed when one of them went to Ephesus to buy food for them and offered a coin of the period of Emperor Decius. As it was a changed world, he naturally attracted attention for he was wearing a costume of 300 year old fashion and spoke a language different from that in vogue. This was because during those two centuries the language, culture, dress etc. had undergone a marked change. So the shopkeeper looked askance at him and, according to a Syriac tradition, he suspected that he had dug up some ancient treasure. Accordingly, he gathered some people of his neighborhood and they took him before the ruler. On questioning, it was discovered that he was one of those followers of Christ, who had fled the city

300 years ago to save their faith. As most of the population had embraced Christianity, the news immediately spread throughout the city and a big crowd of the people along with the Christian Roman Ruler, arrived at the cave. It was then that the sleepers of the cave came to know that they had slept for about three hundred years. So after making salutations to their Christian brothers they lay down and their souls left their bodies.

(18) According to the Syriac tradition, at the time of this occurrence, hot discussions were going on in Ephesus about Resurrection and the Hereafter. Though the people had embraced Christianity under the influence of the Roman Empire, yet traces of shirk and idolatry of the Romans and the effects of the Greek philosophy were still very powerful. So in spite of the Christian creed of the Hereafter, many people denied this, or at least were skeptical about this. To add to this the Sadducee sect of the Jews, who formed a great part of the population of the city, openly denied the Hereafter and professed to base this on the Torah. The Christian scholars, however, could not put forward any strong arguments to refute them: so much so that the reports of the polemical discussion given in Matthew, Mark and Luke, attributed to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), are admittedly very weak even according to the Christian scholars. (Please refer to Matthew 22: 23-33, Mark 12: 18- 27, Luke 20: 27-40). That is why the disbelievers in the Hereafter were having the upper hand and even the believers were being involved in doubts about it. It was at that time that the sleepers of the cave were raised up and furnished an absolute proof of the life after death and turned the scales in favor of the believers in this dispute.

(19) It appears from the context that this was the saying of the righteous people from among the Christians. They were of the opinion that a wall should be raised at the entrance of the cave in order to let the sleepers remain in the same condition in which they were, for they argued that their Lord alone knew best about their rank and position and the reward they deserved.

(20) The people “those who prevailed in their matter” were the Roman rulers and the priests of the Christian Church, who did

not let the righteous Christians have their way. This was because by the middle of the fifth century, the common people, especially the orthodox among the Christians, had become fully involved in shirk and the worship of saints and tombs. They used to visit the tombs of the saints to worship them and kept the statues of Jesus, Mary and the apostles in their churches: so much so that a few years before the rising up of the sleepers of the cave, in 431 A.D., a great council of the representatives of the Christian world had been held in Ephesus itself, in which it was resolved that the creed of the divinity of Christ and of Mary as the mother of God, should be included in the articles of the Christian Church. If we keep in view the year 431, it becomes clear that by "those who prevailed in their matter" are meant the leaders of the Church and the officers of the government, who had the reins of the religious and political powers in their hands. In fact these were the people who were the upholders of shirk and who decided that a mausoleum should be built over the cave of the sleepers to make it a place of worship.

(21) It is an irony that some people among the Muslims have misconstrued this verse of the Quran so as to make it lawful for themselves to build mausoleums, monuments and mosques over the tombs of the righteous persons and saints. The Quran has, in fact, pointed out the deviation of the workers of iniquity who prevailed upon others and built a place of worship over the cave of the sleepers, who were indeed a sign of Resurrection and of the life after death. But they abused this good opportunity and produced another means of practicing shirk.

One fails to understand how anyone can deduce from this verse an argument for the legality of building mosques over the tombs of the righteous people, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) has categorically prohibited this.

(1) Allah has cursed those women who visit tombs and those people who build mosques over them and burn lights over them (Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Dawud, Nasai, Ibn Majah).

(2) Beware that the people, who have passed before you, made the tombs of their Prophets the places of their worship. I forbid you to do that. (Muslim).

(3) Allah has cursed the Jews and the Christians, for they made the tombs of their Prophets the places of their worship. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai).

(4) The behavior of those people was strange: if a righteous person from among them, died they would build a mosque over his grave and draw his pictures. They will be treated as worst criminals on the Day on Resurrection. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai).

Thus, it is clear from the above sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that building of the places of worship over the tombs is utterly unlawful. The Quran has merely stated as a historical fact the sinful act of the Christian priests and the Roman rulers and has not sanctioned such a thing. Therefore no God fearing person can turn this into an argument for building mosques over the tombs.
Incidentally, it will be worthwhile to cite a statement of Rev. T. Arundell who published his discoveries in Asia Minor in 1834. He says that he had seen the remains of the Mausoleums of Mary and the seven sleepers on a hillock near the remains of the ancient city of Ephesus.

سَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمۡ كَلۡبُهُمۡ وَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ خَمۡسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمۡ كَلۡبُهُمۡ رَجۡمًۢا بِالۡغَيۡبِ ۚ
وَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ سَبۡعَةٌ وَّ ثَامِنُهُمۡ كَلۡبُهُمۡ ؕ قُلۡ رَّبِّىۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِمۡ مَّا يَعۡلَمُهُمۡ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلٌ ۬ؕ
فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيۡهِمۡ اِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَاهِرًا ۖ وَّلَا تَسۡتَفۡتِ فِيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡهُمۡ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۲﴾

(18-22) Some will say concerning them: "They were three and their dog, the fourth"; and some will say: "They were five, and their dog, the sixth" all this being merely guesswork; and still others will say: "They were seven, and their dog, the eighth." (22) Say: "My Lord knows their number best. Only a few know their correct number. So do not dispute concerning their number, but stick to what is evident, and do not question anyone about them." (23)

(22) This shows that about three hundred years after this event, at the time of the revelation of the Quran, different stories had become current among the Christians about the sleepers of the cave, but generally these stories had no authentic source behind them. This was because that was not the age of the press in which authentic books might have been published. Therefore naturally the stories of events were carried from place to place by means of oral traditions, and with the passage of time many tales of fiction got mixed up with the real story.

(23) This is meant to impress that the real thing in this story is not the number of the sleepers but the lessons it teaches. (1) A true believer should not on any account turn away from the truth and bow before falsehood. (2) A believer should not merely rely on the material means but on Allah. He should trust in God and follow the right way, even though the outward adverse circumstances might appear to be unfavorable. (3) It is wrong to suppose that Allah is bound by any so called law of nature, for He is able to do anything He wills even though that might seem to be against some common experience. He has the power to change any so called law of nature, whenever and wherever He wills and bring about any extraordinary supernatural thing. So much so that He can raise up anyone who might have been asleep for two hundred years, as if he had slept only for a few hours, without letting any change take place in his appearance, dress, health, indeed in anything, during the passage of time. (4) This teaches us that Allah has the power to bring to life all the generations past, present and future all together as asserted by the Prophets and divine Scriptures. (5) It teaches us that ignorant people have always been perverting the signs of Allah which are sent for the right guidance of the people. That is how the miracle of the sleepers of the cave, which had been shown as a proof of the Hereafter, had been turned into a means of shirk, as if they were some saints who had been sent only for this purpose.

It is obvious from the above mentioned real lessons, which one can learn from the story of the sleepers, that a wise man will pay his attention to these things and not divert it in search of their number, their names, the color of their dog and

the like. Only those people, who have no interest for the reality but for superficial things, will spend their time and energy in making investigations about such things. That is why Allah instructed the Prophet (peace be upon him): You should not enter into useless and irrelevant discussions about such things even if other people try to involve you in them. Instead of wasting your time in such useless things, you should concentrate your attention only on your mission. That is why Allah has not Himself told their exact number lest it should encourage such people as are always hankering after useless things.

وَلَا تَقُ ۥ وۡ لَنَّ لِشَا ۡ ءٍ اِنِّیۡ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِکَ غَدًا ﴿۲۳﴾

(18-23) And never say about anything: "I shall certainly do this tomorrow"

اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ یَّشَآءَ اللّٰہُ ۚ وَاذۡکُرۡ رَّبَّکَ اِذَا نَسِیۡتَ وَقُلۡ عَسٰۤی اَنۡ یَّہۡدِیَنِ رَبِّیۡ لِاَقۡرَبَ مِنۡ ہٰذَا رَشَدًا ﴿۲۴﴾

(18-24) unless Allah should will it. And should you forget (and make such a statement), remember your Lord and say: "I expect my Lord to guide me [24] to what is nearer to rectitude than this."

(24) This is a parenthetical clause which has been inserted here because of its relevancy to the preceding verse, in which it was asserted that the correct number of the sleepers of the cave is known only to Allah and a research into it is a useless task. Therefore one should refrain from investigating into unimportant things, nor enter into discussions about them. This has led to the instruction contained in the parenthetical clause for the benefit of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers who have been told never to make a positive assertion like this: I will do this thing tomorrow, for you do not know whether you will be able to do that thing or not: you have neither the knowledge of the unknown nor have full powers to do what you like. If ever inadvertently you utter anything like this, you should at once remember your Lord and say, InshaAllah. Besides this you do not know whether there will be any good for you in the thing about

which you say: I will do this. It is possible that you may do another thing better than that. Therefore you should trust in God and say: I hope that my Lord will guide me in this matter with that thing which is nearer to the right way for me.

وَ لَبِثُوا فِی كَهۡفِهِمۡ ثَلٰثَ مِاَئَةٍ سِنِیۡنَ وَازۡدَادُوۡا تِسۡعًا ﴿۲۵﴾

(18-25) They remained in the Cave for three hundred years; and others added nine more years. (25)

(25) This sentence is connected with the theme preceding the parenthetical clause like this. Some people will say: “They were three and the fourth was their dog...”, and some people will say that they remained in the cave for three hundred years and some others would add nine more years (to the reckoning of the period). We are of the opinion that the number of the years, 300 or 309, has not been stated by Allah Himself but Allah has cited these as sayings of the people. This opinion is based on this succeeding sentence: Allah knows best about the period of their stay there. If the number of years, given in (Ayat 25), had been from Allah, this succeeding sentence would have been meaningless. Abdullah bin Abbas has also opined that this is not the saying of Allah but that of the people which has been cited as a part of the story.

قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا لَهٗ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ اَبْصِرْ بِهٖ وَ اَسْمِعْ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا يُشْرِكُ فِيْ حُكْمِهٖۤ اَحَدًا ﴿۲۶﴾

(18-26) Say: "Allah knows best how long they remained in it, for only He knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. How well He sees; how well He hears! The creatures have no other guardian than Him; He allows none to share His authority."

وَاتْلُ مَاۤ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿۲۷﴾

(18-27) (O Prophet), [26] recite to them from the Book of your Lord what has been revealed to you for none may change His words; (and were you to make any change in His words) you will find no refuge from Him. [27]

(26) After relating the story of the sleepers of the cave, the Quran begins to review the condition of the Muslims of Makkah at the time of the revelation of the Surah.

(27) This does not mean at all that, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was inclined to make any changes in the Quran to please the disbelievers of Makkah and was thinking of some formula of compromise with the chiefs of the Quraish which necessitated a warning that he was not authorized to do so. As a matter of tact, though this was apparently addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), it was really meant for the disbelievers that they should not entertain any hope whatsoever for anything like this, as if to say: You must understand it once and for all that Our Messenger is not authorized to make any changes in Our revelation, for he has to precisely convey it just as it is sent down to him. If you want to accept it, you will have to accept it in its entirety as it is being sent by the Lord of the Universe. And if you want to reject it, you may do so but you must understand it well that no modification, even in the least, will be made in it to please you. This was the answer to the repeated demand of the disbelievers: If you do insist, O Muhammad (peace be upon him), that we should accept your message in its entirety,

then make certain modifications in it to accommodate some creeds and customs of our forefathers, and we will accept your message. This is our offer for a compromise and this will save our people from divsion. This demand of the disbelievers has been cited in the Quran at several places and the same answer has been given, e.g. When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us, say: Bring another Quran in its stead or make some amendments in it. (Surah Younus, Ayat 15).

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِ ۡنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِ ۡدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ وَ لَا تَعْدُ عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِ ۡدُ زِيْنَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ لَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ وَكَانَ اَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا ۲۸

(18-28) Keep yourself content with those who call upon their Lord, morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and do not let your eyes pass beyond them. Do you seek the pomp and glitter of the world? (28) Do not follow him (29) whose heart We have caused to be heedless of Our remembrance, and who follows his desires, and whose attitude is of excess. (30)

(28) Though these words have also been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), they are really meant for the chiefs of the Quraish. According to a tradition related by Ibn Abbas, the chiefs of the Quraish would say to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they considered it below their dignity to sit with such people as Bilal, Suhaib, Ammar, Khabbab, Ibn-Masud and the like who generally remained in his company, and that if he should send them away, they would be willing to attend his meetings in order to learn about his message. At this Allah revealed this verse: And keep yourself whole heartedly content with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening in order to win His approval and do not turn your attention away from them: Do you desire to discard these sincere but poor people so that the chiefs of the Quraish, the well to do people, should come and sit near you? This was meant to warn the chiefs of the Quraish to this effect: Your wealth, your pomp and show of which you are so proud has no value at all in the sight of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). Nay, those poor people are really more worthy in their sight, for they are sincere and always remember

Allah. The same was the attitude of the chiefs of Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) people, who said: And we also see that none but the meanest and the most shallow of our people have become your followers. Upon this, Noah (peace be upon him) replied: I am not going to drive away those who have believed in me, nor can I say about those whom you disdain that Allah has not bestowed any good on them. (Surah Al-Anbia Ayats 27, 29, (31).

(29) That is, do not yield to what he says, nor submit to him, nor fulfill his desire, nor follow his bidding.

(30) The original Arabic text may also mean: Who discards the truth, breaks all moral limits and rushes on headlong. But in both cases it comes to this: The one, who is neglectful of Allah and becomes a slave of his lust, inevitably transgresses all limits and becomes a victim of immoderation. Therefore the one who will submit to him, will also follow the same way and wander about in deviation after him.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَّمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ نَارًا اَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْتَغِيْثُوْا يُغَاثُوْا بِمَآءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِى الْوُجُوْهَ ؕ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ۝٢٩

(18-29) And proclaim: "This is the Truth from your Lord. Now let him who will, believe; and let him who will, disbelieve. (31) We have prepared a Fire for the wrong-doers whose billowing folds encompass them. (32) If they ask for water, they will be served with a drink like dregs of oil (33) that will scald their faces. How dreadful a drink, and how evil an abode!

(31) This verse makes it quite plain that the story of the sleepers of the cave has been related to tell the opponents of Islam: This is the truth from your Lord. Now whosoever wills, he may accept it and whosoever wills, he may reject it. But people must understand that no compromise will be made in regard to the truth just as the sleepers of the cave did not make any compromise with regard to their creed. They did not make any compromise in regard to the doctrine of Tauhid after they had believed in it and categorically declared: Our Lord is the One Who

alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. After this declaration they did not in any way accede to the making of any compromise with their people, who had gone astray. But they firmly declared: We will not give Him up and pray to other deities, because it will be the most improper thing, if we did so. After making this declaration they left their people and deities and took refuge in the cave without taking any provisions with them. After this when they woke up, the only thing about which they showed any anxiety, was that their people might not succeed in forcing them back to their own faith. After relating these things, the Quran addresses the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect (though these words are really meant for the opponents of Islam): It is absolutely out of question whether any compromise can be made with mushriks and disbelievers. Present the truth intact to them whether they accept it or not. If they do not accept it, they themselves will meet with an evil end. As regards to those, who have accepted the truth, (whether they be youngsters or poor, indigent people or slaves or laborers) they are really those people who have a worth with Allah, and they alone will be honored. Therefore you should not discard them and prefer the chiefs and the rich people who may be neglectful of Allah and be slaves of their own desires, even though they might be possessors of worldly grandeur.

(32) The Arabic word Suradiq literally means sides of a tent but, as used in the case of Hell, it may mean its external boundaries to which its flames and heat may reach. According to some commentators, it applies to the future tense “its walls will be surrounding them” so as to refer to the flames of Hell in the Hereafter. But we are of the opinion that its flames have already encircled, in this very world, these workers of iniquity, who have turned away from the truth and that they cannot escape them.

(33) The Arabic word muhul has several lexical meanings. According to some people, it means the residue of oil; according to others, it is lava which is formed by the melting of things in the earth; according to some others, it is molten matter and according to others, it is pus and blood.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيۡعُ اَجۡرَ مَنۡ اَحۡسَنَ عَمَلًا ۝٣٠

(18-30) As for those who believe and do good We shall not cause their reward to be lost.

اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهِمُ الۡاَنۡهٰرُ يُحَلَّوۡنَ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ اَسَاوِرَ مِنۡ ذَهَبٍ وَّيَلۡبَسُوۡنَ ثِيَابًا خُضۡرًا مِّنۡ سُنۡدُسٍ وَّاِسۡتَبۡرَقٍ مُّتَّكِـِٕيۡنَ فِيۡهَا عَلَى الۡاَرَآئِكِ ؕ نِعۡمَ الثَّوَابُ ؕ وَحَسُنَتۡ مُرۡتَفَقًا ۝٣١ۙ

(18-31) They shall dwell in the Gardens of Eternity, beneath which streams flow. There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, (34) will be arrayed in green garments of silk and rich brocade, and will recline on raised couches. (35) How excellent is their reward, and how nice their resting-place!"

(34) The dwellers of Paradise will be adorned with bracelets of gold like the kings of ancient times. This will be to show that they will be adorned like the kings of this world, whereas an unbeliever and wicked king will be disgraced there.

(35) The Arabic word araaik is plural of arikah which is that kind of throne that is covered with an umbrella. This is also to show that in Paradise the believers will sit on thrones like the kings of this world.

وَاضۡرِبۡ لَهُمۡ مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيۡنِ جَعَلۡنَا لِاَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيۡنِ مِنۡ اَعۡنَابٍ وَّحَفَفۡنٰهُمَا بِنَخۡلٍ وَّجَعَلۡنَا بَيۡنَهُمَا زَرۡعًا ؕ ۝٣٢

(18-32) (O Muhammad), propound a parable to them. (36) There were two men of whom We bestowed upon one of the two vineyards, surrounding both of them with date-palms and putting a tillage in between.

(36) In order to understand the significance of this parable we should keep in view (Ayat 28) in which arrogant chiefs of Makkah were told that the poor companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not be discarded to please them.

كِلۡتَا الۡجَنَّتَيۡنِ اٰتَتۡ اُكُلَهَا وَلَمۡ تَظۡلِمۡ مِّنۡهُ شَيۡـًٔا ۙ وَّفَجَّرۡنَا خِلٰلَهُمَا نَهَرًا ۝٣٣

(18-33) Both the vineyards yielded abundant produce without failure and We caused a stream to flow in their midst

وَّكَانَ لَ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصٰحِبِهٖ وَ وَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّ اَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ۝٣٤

(18-34) so the owner had fruit in abundance and he said to his neighbour, while conversing with him: "I have greater wealth than you and I am stronger than you in numbers."

وَ دَخَلَ جَنَّتَهٗ وَ هُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ قَالَ مَآ اَظُنُّ اَنْ تَبِيْدَ هٰذِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ۝٣٥

(18-35) Then he entered his vine-yard (37) and said, wronging himself: "Surely, I do not believe that all this will ever perish.

(37) He considered his gardens to be Paradise. Thus he behaved like those mean persons who, when rise to power and wealth, are always involved in the misunderstanding that they are enjoying Paradise in this world, therefore they do not stand in need of any other Paradise.

وَّمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً وَّ لَئِنْ رُّدِدْتُّ اِلٰى رَبِّيْ لَاَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا ۝٣٦

(18-36) Nor do I believe that the Hour of Resurrection will ever come to pass. And even if I am returned to my Lord, I shall find a better place than this." (38)

(38) That is, I don’t think there is any life after death, but supposing there be one, I shall fare even better there than in my present life, for my prosperity is a clear proof that I am a favorite of God.

قَالَ لَهٗ صَاحِبُهٗ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِيْ خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىكَ رَجُلًا ۝٣٧

(18-37) While conversing with him his neighbour exclaimed: "Do you deny Him Who created you out of dust, then out of a drop of sperm, and then fashioned you into a complete man? (39)

(39) This shows that unbelief in Allah is not confined to the denial of the existence of God in so many words, but arrogance, pride, vanity and the denial of the Hereafter are also kufr. Although that person did not deny the existence of Allah, he professed it as is apparent from his words (And if I am brought back to my Lord), yet in spite of his profession, his neighbor charged him with unbelief in Allah. This is because the person, who considers his wealth and his grandeur etc. to be the fruits of his own power and capability and not the favors of Allah, and who thinks that they are everlasting and none can take than away from him and that he is not accountable to anyone, is guilty of unbelief in Allah, even though he might profess belief in Him, for he acknowledges Allah as a Being and not as his Master, Owner and Sovereign. In fact, belief in Allah demands not merely the profession of His existence but also the acknowledgment of His Sovereignty, Mastery, Rule and the like.

لٰكِنَّا۠ هُوَ اللّٰهُ رَبِّيْ وَلَآ اُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾

(18-38) As for myself, Allah alone is my Lord, and I associate none with my Lord in His Divinity.

وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ اِنْ تَرَنِ اَنَا اَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾

(18-39) When you entered your vineyard, why did you not say: 'Whatever Allah wills shall come to pass, for there is no power (40) save with Allah!' If you find me less than yourself in wealth and children

(40) That is, If we are able to do anything, it is by the help and support of Allah alone.

فَعَسٰى رَبِّیۡۤ اَنۡ یُّؤۡتِیَنِ خَیۡرًا مِّنۡ جَنَّتِکَ وَ یُرۡسِلَ عَلَیۡہَا حُسۡبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتُصۡبِحَ صَعِیۡدًا زَلَقًا ۙ﴿۴۰﴾

(18-40) it may well be that my Lord will give me something better than your vineyard, and send a calamity upon your vineyard from the heavens and it will be reduced to a barren waste,

اَوۡ یُصۡبِحَ مَآؤُہَا غَوۡرًا فَلَنۡ تَسۡتَطِیۡعَ لَہٗ طَلَبًا ﴿۴۱﴾

(18-41) or the water of your vineyard will be drained deep into the ground so that you will not be able to seek it out."

وَاُحِیۡطَ بِثَمَرِہٖ فَاَصۡبَحَ یُقَلِّبُ کَفَّیۡہِ عَلٰی مَاۤ اَنۡفَقَ فِیۡہَا وَ ہِیَ خَاوِیَۃٌ عَلٰی عُرُوۡشِہَا وَ یَقُوۡلُ یٰلَیۡتَنِیۡ لَمۡ اُشۡرِکۡ بِرَبِّیۡۤ اَحَدًا ﴿۴۲﴾

(18-42) Eventually all his produce was destroyed and he began to wring his hands in sorrow at the loss of what he had spent on it, and on seeing it fallen down upon its trellises, saying: "Would I had not associated anyone with my Lord in His Divinity."

وَلَمۡ تَکُنۡ لَّہٗ فِئَۃٌ یَّنۡصُرُوۡنَہٗ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰہِ ؕ وَ مَا کَانَ مُنۡتَصِرًا ﴿۴۳﴾

(18-43) And there was no host, beside Allah, to help him, nor could he be of any help to himself.

ہُنَالِکَ الۡوَلَایَۃُ لِلّٰہِ الۡحَقِّ ؕ ہُوَ خَیۡرٌ ثَوَابًا وَّ خَیۡرٌ عُقۡبًا ﴿۴۴﴾

(18-44) (Then he knew) that all power of protection rests with Allah, the True One. He is the best to reward, the best to determine the end of things.

وَاضۡرِبۡ لَہُمۡ مَّثَلَ الۡحَیٰوۃِ الدُّنۡیَا کَمَآءٍ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخۡتَلَطَ بِہٖ نَبَاتُ الۡاَرۡضِ فَاَصۡبَحَ ہَشِیۡمًا تَذۡرُوۡہُ الرِّیٰحُ ؕ وَ کَانَ اللّٰہُ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ مُّقۡتَدِرًا ﴿۴۵﴾

(18-45) (O Prophet), propound to them the parable of the present life: it is like the vegetation of the earth which flourished luxuriantly when it mingled with the water that We sent down from the sky, but after that the same vegetation turned into

stubble which the winds blew about. Allah alone has the power over all things. (41)

(41) Allah has power over everything. He gives life and also death, He causes the rise and the downfall. It is by His command that the seasons change. Therefore, O disbelievers, if you are enjoying prosperity today, you should be under no delusion that this condition will remain forever. That God, by Whose command these things have been bestowed on you, has the power to snatch away all this by another command.

اَلْمَالُ وَ الْبَنُوْ نَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّ خَيْرٌ اَمَلًا ۴۶

(18-46) Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of the world. But the deeds of lasting righteousness are the best in the sight of your Lord in reward, and far better a source of hope.

وَ يَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَ تَرَى الْاَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۙ وَّ حَشَرْنٰهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ۴۷

(18-47) Bear in mind the Day when We shall set the mountains in motion (42) and you will find the earth void and bare. (43) On that Day We shall muster all men together, leaving none of them behind. (44)

(42) The mountains will begin to move about like clouds when the gravitation of the earth shall be brought to an end. The Quran has described the same thing in(Surah An- Namal, Ayat 88)in this way: When you see the mountains, you consider them to be firmly fixed, but they shall be floating about like clouds at that time.

(43) “You will see the earth as a leveled plain”: You will find no vegetation and no building on it and it will become a barren plain. It is the same thing that has been stated in (Ayat 8) of this chapter.

(44) That is, We will muster together every human being from the first man, Adam, to the last one born in the last moment of the Day of Resurrection: even that child which had breathed the first breath after its birth, shall be resurrected and all shall be mustered at one and the same tune.

وَ عُرِضُوا عَلٰى رَبِّکَ صَفًّا ؕ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا کَمَا خَلَقْنٰکُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّۃٍ ۭ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَلَّنْ نَّجْعَلَ لَکُمْ مَّوْعِدًا ﴿۴۸﴾

(18-48) They shall be brought before your Lord, all lined up, and shall be told: "Now, indeed, you have come before Us in the manner We created you in the first instance, (45) although you thought that We shall not appoint a tryst (with Us)."

(45) This thing will be addressed to those who denied the Hereafter, as if to say: Well, now you see that the information given by the Prophets has come out to be true. They told you that Allah would bring you to life again as He first brought you out from the wombs of your mothers but you disbelieved in it. Now say whether you have been brought to life for the second time or not.

وَوُضِعَ الْکِتٰبُ فَتَرَی الْمُجْرِمِیْنَ مُشْفِقِیْنَ مِمَّا فِیْہِ وَ یَقُوْلُوْنَ یٰوَیْلَتَنَا مَالِ ھٰذَا الْکِتٰبِ لَا یُغَادِرُ صَغِیْرَۃً وَّلَا کَبِیْرَۃً اِلَّآ اَحْصٰىھَا ۚ وَ وَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا ؕ وَ لَا یَظْلِمُ رَبُّکَ اَحَدًا ﴿۴۹﴾

(18-49) And then the Record of their deeds shall be placed before them and you will see the guilty full of fear for what it contains, and will say: "Woe to us! What a Record this is! It leaves nothing, big or small, but encompasses it." They will find their deeds confronting them. Your Lord wrongs no one. (46)

(46) “And your Lord does not do injustice to anyone”: Neither will an evil deed, not committed by someone, have been recorded in his conduct register, nor shall anyone be punished more than one deserved for his crime, nor shall an innocent person be punished at all.

وَ اِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ
فَفَسَقَ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ اَفَتَتَّخِذُوْنَهٗ وَ ذُرِّيَّتَهٗٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِيْ وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ ؕ
بِئْسَ لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَدَلًا ۝٥٠

(18-50) And recall when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam"; all of them fell prostrate, except Iblis. (47) He was of the jinn and so disobeyed the command of his Lord. (48) Will you, then, take him and his progeny as your guardians rather than Me although they are your open enemies? What an evil substitute are these wrong-doers taking!

(47) The reference to the story of Adam and Iblis has been made here to warn the erring people of their folly. It is an obvious folly that people should discard their Prophets, who were their well wishers, and get entangled in the snare set by their eternal enemy, Iblis, who has been jealous of man ever since he refused to bow down before Adam and became accursed.

(48) It was possible for Iblis to disobey Allah because he was not one of the angels but one of the jinns. It must be noted that the Quran is very explicit that the angels are inherently obedient.

(1) They do not show arrogance; they fear their Lord Who is above them, and do whatever they are bidden. (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 50).

(2) They do not disobey the command that is given to them by their Lord and do whatever they are bidden to do. (Surah At-Tahrim, Ayat 6).

In contrast to the angels, the jinns have been, like human beings, given the option to obey or not to obey. Therefore they have been given the power to believe or disbelieve, to obey or not to obey. This thing has been made explicit here by saying that Iblis was one of the jinns, so he deliberately chose the way of disobedience. Incidentally, this verse removes all those misunderstandings that are generally found among the common people that Iblis was one of the angels and not an ordinary angel but the instructor of the angels. As regards to the difficulty that arises because of this statement of the Quran: When We said to

the angels, bow down before Adam. They bowed down but Iblis did not, it should be noted that the command to the angels was meant for all those on the earth who were under the administration of the angels so that they should also be made submissive to man. Accordingly all these creatures bowed along with the angels but Iblis refused to bow down along with them.

ۡ اَشۡہَدۡتُّہُمۡ خَلۡقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا خَلۡقَ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ ۪ وَمَا کُنۡتُ مُتَّخِذَ الۡمُضِلِّیۡنَ عَضُدًا ﴿۵۱﴾

(18-51) I did not call them to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor in their own creation. (49) I do not seek the aid of those who lead people astray.

(49) This thing has been asserted to impress on the disbelievers that the satans were not entitled to their submission and worship, for they had no share at all in the creation of the heavens and the earth, nay, they themselves were the creation of Allah: therefore Allah alone was worthy of worship.

وَ یَوۡمَ یَقُوۡلُ نَادُوۡا شُرَکَآءِیَ الَّذِیۡنَ زَعَمۡتُمۡ فَدَعَوۡہُمۡ فَلَمۡ یَسۡتَجِیۡبُوۡا لَہُمۡ وَجَعَلۡنَا بَیۡنَہُمۡ مَّوۡبِقًا ﴿۵۲﴾

(18-52) What will such people do on the Day when the Lord will say: "Now call upon all those whom you believed to be My partners?" (50) Thereupon they will call upon them, but they will not respond to their call; and We shall make them a common pit of doom, (51)

(50) This theme has already been stated at several places in the Quran. This is to impress that it is shirk to discard the commandments and the guidance of Allah and to follow the orders and guidance of any other than Allah, though one may not be professing with his tongue that there is any partner of Allah: nay, if one might be cursing others but at the same time following their orders instead of divine commandments, even then that one shall be guilty of shirk. For instance, we see that everyone in this world curses satans but still follows them. According to the Quran, in spite of cursing them, if people follow satans, they shall be

guilty of setting up satans as partners with Allah. Though this will not be shirk in so many words, it will be tantamount to the practice of shirk and the Quran denounces this as shirk.

(51) Generally the commentators have assigned two meanings to this. The one is the same that we have adopted in our translation and the other is this: We will cause enmity between them. That is: Their friendship in this world shall be turned into bitter enmity in the Hereafter.

وَرَاَ الْمُجْرِمُوْ نَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ مُّوَاقِعُوْ هَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ۝٥٣

(18-53) and the guilty shall behold the Fire and know that they are bound to fall into it, and will find no escape from it.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِيْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۭ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ اَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ۝٥٤

(18-54) And surely We have explained matters to people in the Qur'an in diverse ways, using all manner of parables. But man is exceedingly contentious.

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَاۗءَهُمُ الْهُدٰى وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ۝٥٥

(18-55) What is it that prevented mankind from believing when the guidance came to them, and from asking forgiveness of their Lord, except that they would like to be treated as the nations of yore, or that they would like to see the scourge come upon them face to face? (52)

(52) This is to warn the people that the Quran has left no stone unturned in making the truth plain. It has employed all kinds of arguments, parables, similitude and used all the possible effective ways to appeal to the heart and the mind of man, and adopted the best possible style. If, in spite of this, they do not accept the truth, it is obvious that they are waiting for God’s scourge like the one that visited the former communities to make them realize their error.

وَ مَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ وَ يُجَادِلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوْا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَ اتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِيْ وَمَآ اُنْذِرُوْا هُزُوًا ﴿۵۶﴾

(18-56) We raise Messengers only to give good news and to warn. (53) But the unbelievers resort to falsehood in order to rebut the truth with it, and scoff at My revelations and My warnings.

(53) This verse has two meanings.

(1) We send Our Messengers to forewarn the people before the coming of the judgment of the good results of obedience and the evil consequences of disobedience. But these foolish people are not taking advantage of these forewarnings and insist on seeing the same evil end from which the Messengers desire to save them.

(2) If they insist on meeting with the scourge, they should not demand this from the Messenger because the Messenger is sent not to bring a scourge but to warn the people beforehand to escape from it.

وَ مَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ فَاَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰهُ ؕ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَنْ يَّهْتَدُوْٓا اِذًا اَبَدًا ﴿۵۷﴾

(18-57) Who is more wicked than the man who, when he is reminded by the revelations of his Lord, turns away from them and forgets (the consequence of) the deeds wrought by his own hands? We have laid veils over their hearts lest they understand the message of the Qur'an, and We have caused heaviness in their ears. Call them as you may to the Right Path, they will not be ever guided aright. (54)

(54) Allah puts a covering over the heart of a person and makes his ears hard of hearing the truth when he adopts the attitude of contention, dispute, wrangling and argumentation towards the admonition of a well wisher and tries to defeat the

truth with the weapons of falsehood and cunning. Naturally this attitude produces in him obduracy and obstinacy so that he turns a deaf ear towards guidance, and is unwilling to realize his error before seeing his evil end. For such people pay no heed to admonition and warning and insist on falling into the abyss of perdition: then and then alone they are convinced that it was perdition towards which they were rushing headlong.

وَ رَبُّكَ الْغَفُوْرُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ؕ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ؕ بَلْ لَّهُمْ مَّوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَّجِدُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مَوْئِلًا ۝٥٨

(18-58) Your Lord is All-Forgiving, full of mercy. Had He wished to take them to task for their doings, He would have hastened in sending His scourge upon them. But He has set for them a time-limit which they cannot evade. (55)

(55) This is to warn the foolish people that they should not be deluded by the respite that is given to them and presume that they will never be taken to task whatever they may go on doing. They forget that Allah gives them respite because He is Forgiving and Forbearing and does not punish the evil doers on the spot, for His Mercy demands that the evil doers should be given respite so that they may mend their ways.

وَ تِلْكَ الْقُرٰى اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوْا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ مَّوْعِدًا ۝٥٩

(18-59) All the townships afflicted with scourge are before your eyes. (56) When they committed wrong, We destroyed them. For the destruction of each We had set a definite term.

(56) The ruined habitations were of Saba, Thamud, Midian and the people of Prophet Lot, which were visited by the Quraish during their trade journeys, and which were quite well known to other Arabs also.

وَ اِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِفَتٰىهُ لَاۤ اَبْرَحُ حَتّٰۤى اَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ اَوْ اَمْضِىَ حُقُبًا ۝٦٠

(18-60) (And recount to them the story of Moses) when Moses said to his servant: "I will journey on until I reach the point where the two rivers meet, though I may march on for ages."

(57) Though this story was told in answer to the question of the disbelievers, it has been used to impress a very important truth on the minds of both the disbelievers and the believers. It is this: those people who draw their conclusions only from the seeming aspects of events, make a very serious error in their deductions, for they only see what is apparent and do not go deep into the divine wisdom that underlies them. When they daily see the prosperity of the tyrants and the afflictions of the innocent people, the affluence of the disobedient people and the indigence of the obedient people, the enjoyments of the wicked people and the adversity of the virtuous people, they get involved in mental conflicts, nay, they become victims of misunderstandings because they do not comprehend the wisdom behind them. The disbelievers and the tyrants conclude from this that the world is functioning without any moral laws and has no sovereign, and, if there is one, he must be senseless and unjust: therefore one may do whatever he desires for there is none to whom one shall be accountable. On the other hand, when the believers see those things, they become so frustrated and disheartened that sometimes their faiths are put to a very hard trial. It was to unravel the wisdom behind this mystery that Allah slightly lifted the curtain from the reality governing His factory, so that Moses (peace be upon him) might see the wisdom behind the events that are happening day and night and how their seeming aspect is quite different from the reality.

Now let us consider the question: When and where did this event take place? The Quran says nothing about this. There is a tradition related by Aufi in which he cites a saying of Ibn Abbas to this effect: This event happened after the destruction of Pharaoh when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had settled his people in Egypt. But this is not supported by other more authentic traditions from Ibn Abbas which have been cited in the collection of Bukhari and other books of traditions, nor is there any other source which may prove that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him)

ever settled in Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh. On the contrary, the Quran says explicitly that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) passed his entire life after exodus from Egypt in the desert (Sinai and At-Tih). Therefore the tradition from Aufi cannot be accepted. However, if we consider the details of this story, two things are quite obvious. (1) These things would have been demonstrated to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the earlier period of his Prophethood because such things are needed in the beginning of Prophethood for the teaching and training of the Prophets. (2) As this story has been cited to comfort the believers of Makkah, it can be reasonably concluded that these demonstrations would have been shown to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), when the Israelites were encountering the same conditions as the Muslims of Makkah did at the time of the revelation of this Surah. On the basis of these two things, we are of the opinion (and correct knowledge is with Allah alone) that this event relates to the period when the persecution of the Israelites by Pharaoh was at its height and, like the chiefs of the Quraish, Pharaoh and his courtiers were deluded by delay in the scourge that there was no power above them to take them to task, and like the persecuted Muslims of Makkah, the persecuted Muslims of Egypt were crying in their agony, as if to say: Our Lord, how long will the prosperity of these tyrants and our adversity continue. So much so that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself cried out: Our Lord, Thou hast bestowed on Pharaoh and his nobles splendor and possessions in the worldly life; O our Lord, hast Thou done this that they might lead astray the people from Thy Way. (Surah Younus, Ayat 88).

If our conjecture is correct, then it may be concluded that probably this event took place during Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) journey to Sudan, and by the confluence of the rivers is meant the site of the present city of Khartum where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet together.

The Bible does not say anything about this event but the Talmud does relate this though it assigns it to Rabbi Jochanan, the son of Levi, instead of to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), and according to it the other person was Elijah who had been taken up

alive to heaven and joined with the angels for the purpose of the administration of the world. (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, pp. 313- 16).

It is just possible that like the events, which happened before the exodus, this event also might not have remained intact but during the passage of centuries changes and alterations might have been made in it. But it is a pity that some Muslims have been so influenced by the Talmud that they opine that in this story Moses does not refer to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) but to some other person bearing the same name. They forget that every tradition of the Talmud is not necessarily correct, nor have we any reason to suppose that the Quran has related the story concerning some unknown person bearing the name Moses. Above all, when we learn from an authentic tradition related by Ubayy-bin-Kaab that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself made it clear that in this story, by Moses is meant Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), there is absolutely no reason why any Muslim should consider any statement of the Talmud at all.

The Orientalists have, as usual, tried to make a research into the sources of this story and have pointed out that The Quranic story may be traced back to three main sources. (1) The Gilgamesh Epic. (2) The Alexander Romance. (3) The Jewish Legend of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua hen Levi (Encyclopaedia of Islam new edition and Shorter Erlcyclopaedia of Islam under the heading Al Khadir). This is because these malicious scholars decide beforehand that their scientific research must lead to the conclusion that the Quran is not a revealed book: therefore they have, anyhow or other, to produce a proof that whatever Muhammad (peace be upon him) has presented as revelation, has been plagiarized from such and such sources. In this these people brazen facedly use facts and quotations so cunningly and cleverly as to achieve their mean end and one begins to have nausea at their research. If that is research what these bigoted forgers make, then one is compelled to curse their knowledge and research.

We ask them to answer our questions in order to expose their research:

(1) What proof do they have to make the claim that the Quran has based a certain statement on the contents of a couple of ancient books? Obviously it will not be research to build this claim on the scant basis that a certain statement made in the Quran is similar to the one found in these books.

(2) Do they possess any knowledge that at the time of the revelation of the Quran there was a library at Makkah from which the Prophet (peace be upon him) collected material for the Quran? This question is pertinent because if a list were to be made of the numerous books in different languages, which they allege were sources of the stories and statements contained in the Quran, it will become long enough for a big library. Do they have any proof that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had arranged for such translators as translated into Arabic those books from different languages for his use? If it is not so and their allegation is based on a couple of journeys which the Prophet (peace be upon him) made outside Arabia, a question arises: How many books did the Prophet (peace be upon him) copy or commit to memory during these trade journeys before his Prophethood? And how is it that even a day before he claimed to be a Prophet, no sign at all was displayed in his conversation that he had gathered such information as was revealed in the Quran afterwards?

(3) How is it then that the contemporary disbelievers of Makkah and the Jews and the Christians, who like them, were always in search of such a proof, could not put forward even a single instance of plagiarism? They had a good reason to produce an instance of this because they were being challenged over and over again to refute the claim that the Quran was a revealed book and it had no other source than divine knowledge and that if they said that it was a human work, they were to prove this by bringing the like of it. Though this challenge had broken the back of the contemporary opponents of Islam, they could not point out even a single plausible source that might prove reasonably that the Quran was based on it. In the light of these facts one may ask: Why had the contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be upon him) failed in their research and how

have the opponents of Islam succeeded in their attempt today after the passage of more than a thousand years?

(4) The last and the most important question is: Does it not show that it is bigotry and malice that has misled the opponents of Islam to discard the possibility that the Quran may be a revealed book of Allah and to concentrate all their efforts to prove that it is not so at all? The tact that its stories are similar to those contained in the former books, could be considered equally in this light that the Quran was a revealed book and was relating them in order to correct those errors that had crept into them during the passage of time. Why should their research be confined to prove that those books are the real source of the stories of the Quran and not to consider the other possibility that the Quran itself was a revealed book?

An impartial person who will consider these questions will inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the research which the orientalists have presented in the name of knowledge is not worth any serious consideration.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيۡنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوۡتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيۡلَهٗ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ سَرَبًا ۚ ﴿۶۱﴾

(18-61) But when they reached the point where the two rivers meet, they forgot their fish, and it took its way into the sea, as if through a tunnel.

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتٰٮهُ اٰتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا لَقَدۡ لَقِيۡنَا مِنۡ سَفَرِنَا هٰذَا نَصَبًا ﴿۶۲﴾

(18-62) When they had journeyed further on, Moses said to his servant: "Bring us our repast. We are surely fatigued by today's journey."

قَالَ اَرَءَيۡتَ اِذۡ اَوَيۡنَاۤ اِلَى الصَّخۡرَةِ فَاِنِّىۡ نَسِيۡتُ الۡحُوۡتَ وَمَاۤ اَنۡسٰنِيۡهُ اِلَّا الشَّيۡطٰنُ اَنۡ اَذۡكُرَهٗ ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيۡلَهٗ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ ۖ عَجَبًا ﴿۶۳﴾

(18-63) The servant said: "Did you see what happened? When we betook ourselves to the rock to take rest, I forgot the fish and it is only Satan who caused me to forget to mention it to you so that it made its way into the sea in a strange manner."

قَالَ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۚ فَارْتَدَّا عٰلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا ﴿٦٤﴾

(18-64) Moses said: "That is what we were looking for." [58] So the two turned back, retracing their footsteps,

(58) That is, the same was the sign of the place of our destination. This shows that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had taken this journey at Allah's behest to meet His servant. He had been told that he would meet the servant at the place where the fish would disappear.

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا اٰتَيْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

(18-65) and there they found one of Our servants upon whom We had bestowed Our mercy, and to whom We had imparted a special knowledge from Ourselves. [59]

(59) The name of this servant has been stated to be Khidr in all the authentic books of traditions. Thus there is no reason why it should be considered at all that his name was Elijah, as some people have asserted under the influence of the Israelite traditions. Their assertion is incorrect not only because it contradicts the assertion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but it is also absurd because Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) was born several hundred years after Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Though the Quran does not mention the name of the attendant of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), according to some traditions he was Joshua, the son of Nun, who succeeded him.

قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰى هَلْ اَتَّبِعُكَ عٰٓى اَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

(18-66) Moses said to him: "May I follow you that you may teach me something of the wisdom which you have been taught?"

قَالَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾

(18-67) He answered: "You will surely not be able to bear with me.

وَكَيۡفَ تَصۡبِرُ عَلٰى مَا لَمۡ تُحِطۡ بِهٖ خُبۡرًا ﴿۶۸﴾

(18-68) For how can you patiently bear with something you cannot encompass in your knowledge?"

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِىۡۤ اِنۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ صَابِرًا وَّلَاۤ اَعۡصِىۡ لَكَ اَمۡرًا ﴿۶۹﴾

(18-69) Moses replied: "You shall find me, if Allah wills, patient; and I shall not disobey you in anything."

قَالَ فَاِنِ اتَّبَعۡتَنِىۡ فَلَا تَسۡـَٔـلۡنِىۡ عَنۡ شَىۡءٍ حَتّٰۤى اُحۡدِثَ لَكَ مِنۡهُ ذِكۡرًا ﴿۷۰﴾

(18-70) He said: "Well, if you follow me, do not ask me concerning anything until I myself mention it to you."

فَانۡطَلَقَا حَتّٰۤى اِذَا رَكِبَا فِى السَّفِيۡنَةِ خَرَقَهَا ؕ قَالَ اَخَرَقۡتَهَا لِتُغۡرِقَ اَهۡلَهَا ۚ لَقَدۡ جِئۡتَ شَيۡـًٔا اِمۡرًا ﴿۷۱﴾

(18-71) Then the two went forth until, when they embarked on the boat, he made a hole in it, whereupon Moses exclaimed: "Have you made a hole in it so as to drown the people in the boat? You have certainly done an awful thing."

قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ اِنَّكَ لَنۡ تَسۡتَطِيۡعَ مَعِىَ صَبۡرًا ﴿۷۲﴾

(18-72) He replied: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to patiently bear with me?"

قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذۡنِىۡ بِمَا نَسِيۡتُ وَلَا تُرۡهِقۡنِىۡ مِنۡ اَمۡرِىۡ عُسۡرًا ﴿۷۳﴾

(18-73) Moses said: "Do not take me to task at my forgetfulness, and do not be hard on me."

فَانۡطَلَقَا حَتّٰۤى اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا فَقَتَلَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَقَتَلۡتَ نَفۡسًا زَكِيَّةًۢ بِغَيۡرِ نَفۡسٍ ؕ لَقَدۡ جِئۡتَ شَيۡـًٔا نُّكۡرًا ﴿۷۴﴾

(18-74) Then the two went forth until they met a lad whom he slew, whereupon Moses exclaimed: "What! Have you slain an innocent person without his having slain anyone? Surely you have done a horrible thing."

قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّكَ اِنَّكَ لَنۡ تَسۡتَطِيۡعَ مَعِىَ صَبۡرًا ﴿۷۵﴾

(18-75) He said: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to patiently bear with me?"

قَالَ اِنۡ سَاَلۡتُكَ عَنۡ شَىۡءٍ بَعۡدَهَا فَلَا تُصٰحِبۡنِىۡ قَدۡ بَلَغۡتَ مِنۡ لَّدُنِّىۡ عُذۡرًا ﴿۷۶﴾

(18-76) Moses said: "Keep me no more in your company if I question you concerning anything after this. You will then be fully justified."

فَانۡطَلَقَا حَتّٰٓى اِذَاۤ اَتَيَاۤ اَهۡلَ قَرۡيَةِ ِۨاسۡتَطۡعَمَاۤ اَهۡلَهَا فَاَبَوۡا اَنۡ يُّضَيِّفُوۡهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيۡهَا جِدَارًا يُّرِيۡدُ اَنۡ يَّنۡقَضَّ فَاَقَامَهٗ ؕ قَالَ لَوۡ شِئۡتَ لَتَّخَذۡتَ عَلَيۡهِ اَجۡرًا ﴿۷۷﴾

(18-77) Then the two went forth until when they came to a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to play host to them. They found in that town a wall that was on the verge of tumbling down, and he buttressed it, whereupon Moses said: "If you had wished, you could have received payment for it."

قَالَ هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيۡنِىۡ وَبَيۡنِكَ ۚ سَاُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَاۡوِيۡلِ مَا لَمۡ تَسۡتَطِعۡ عَّلَيۡهِ صَبۡرًا ﴿۷۸﴾

(18-78) He said: "This brings me and you to a parting of ways. Now I shall explain to you the true meaning of things about which you could not remain patient.

اَمَّا السَّفِيۡنَةُ فَكَانَتۡ لِمَسٰكِيۡنَ يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ فَاَرَدۡتُّ اَنۡ اَعِيۡبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَآءَهُمۡ مَّلِكٌ يَّاۡخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِيۡنَةٍ غَصۡبًا ﴿۷۹﴾

(18-79) As for the boat it belonged to some poor people who worked on the river, and I desired to damage it for beyond

them lay the dominion of a king who was wont to seize every boat by force.

وَ اَمَّا الْغُلٰمُ فَكَانَ اَبَوٰهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِيْنَاۤ اَنْ يُّرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾

(18-80) As for the lad, his parents were people of faith, and we feared lest he should plague them with transgression and disbelief,

فَاَرَدْنَاۤ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكٰوةً وَّ اَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ﴿٨١﴾

(18-81) and we desired that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more upright and more tender hearted.

وَ اَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلٰمَيْنِ يَتِيْمَيْنِ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهٗ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ اَبُوْهُمَا صَالِحًا فَاَرَادَ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يَّبْلُغَاۤ اَشُدَّهُمَا وَ يَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا ۖ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهٗ عَنْ اَمْرِىْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَاْوِيْلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾

(18-82) As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and under it there was a treasure that belonged to them. Their father was a righteous man and your Lord intended that they should come of age and then bring forth their treasure as a mercy from your Lord; I did not do this of my own bidding. This is the true meaning of things with which you could not keep your patience." (60)

(60) In connection with this story, a very hard problem arises to which an answer must be found. Two of the three things done by Khidr are obviously against those commandments of the law which have always been in force since the creation of man. No law allows anyone the right to damage the property of another and kill an innocent person. So much so that if a man were to know by inspiration that some usurper would illegally seize a certain boat, and that a certain boy would be involved in a rebellion and unbelief, even then no law, sent down by Allah, makes it lawful that one should bore a hole in the boat and kill the innocent boy by virtue of his inspiration. If in answer to this, one were to say that Khidr committed these two acts by the

commands of Allah, this does not solve the problem, for the question is not this: “By whose command did Khidr commit these acts”, but it is this: “What was the nature of these commands”? This is important because Khidr did these acts in accordance with divine command, for he himself says that these acts of his were not done by his own authority, but were moved by the mercy of Allah, and Allah Himself has testified this by saying: “We gave him a special knowledge from Ourselves”. Thus it is beyond any doubt that these acts were done by the command of Allah, but the question about the nature of the command remains there, for it is obvious that these commands were not legal because it is not allowed by any divine law, and the fundamental principles of the Quran also do not allow that a person should kill another person without any proof of his guilt. Therefore we shall have to admit that these commands belonged to one of those decrees of Allah in accordance with which one sick person recovers, while another dies: one becomes prosperous and the other is ruined. If the commands given to Khidr were of this nature, then one must come to the conclusion that Khidr was an angel (or some other kind of Allah’s creation) who is not bound by the divine law prescribed for human beings, for such commands as have no legal aspect, can be addressed to angels only. This is because the question of the lawful or the unlawful cannot arise about them: they obey the commands of Allah without having any personal power. In contrast to them, a man shall be guilty of a sin whether he does any such thing inadvertently by intuition or by some inspiration, if his act goes against some divine commandment. This is because a man is bound to abide by divine commandments as a man, and there is no room whatsoever in the divine law that an act may become lawful for a man merely because he had received an instruction by inspiration and had been informed in a secret way of the wisdom of that unlawful act.

The above mentioned principle has been unanimously accepted by scholars of the divine law and the leaders of Sufism, Allamah Alusi has cited in detail the sayings of Abdul Wahhab Shiirani, Muhy-ud-Din ibn-Arabi, Mujaddid Alf Thani, Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani, Junaid Baghdadi, Sirri Saqti, Abul-Hussain An-nuri, Abu Said-al- Kharraz, Ahmad ud-Dainauri and Imam Ghazzali to this

effect that it is not lawful even for a sufi to act in accordance with that inspiration of his own which goes against a fundamental of law. (Ruh-ul-Maani, Vol. XVI, pp. 16-18). That is why we have come to the conclusion that Khidr must be an angel, or some other kind of Allah's creation, exempted from human law, for he could not be the only exception to the above mentioned formula. Therefore we inevitably come to the conclusion that he was one of those servants of Allah who act in accordance with the will of Allah and not in accordance with the divine law prescribed for human beings.

We would have accepted the theory that Khidr was a human being, if the Quran had plainly asserted that the servant to whom Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was sent for training, was a man. But the Quran does not specifically say that he was a human being but says that he was one of Our servants which does not show that he was necessarily a human being. Besides this, there is no tradition which specifically says that Khidr was a human being. In the authentic traditions related by Said bin Jubair, Ibn Abbas, Ubayy bin Kaab from the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Arabic word rajul has been used for Khidr, which though generally used for human beings, is not exclusively used for human beings. In the Quran itself, this word has been used for Jinns also (Surah Al-Jin, Ayat 6). It is also obvious that when a jinn or an angel or an invisible being will come before a human being, he will surely come in human shape and, in that form; he will be called a bashar (man), just like the angel who came before Mary in the shape of a human being (Surah Maryam, Ayat 17). Thus the word rajul, used for Khidr in the above mentioned tradition by the Prophet (peace be upon him), does not necessarily mean that he was a human being. Therefore we are quite justified in the light of the above discussion to believe that Khidr was one of the angels or some other kind of Allah's creation who is not bound by the divine law prescribed for human beings. Some of the former scholars of the Quran have also expressed the same opinion which has been cited by Ibn Kathir in his commentary on the authority of Mawardi.

وَ يَسْـَٔلُوْ نَكَ عَ ذِى الْقَرْنَيْ نِ ؕ قُلْ سَاَتْلُوْ عَلَيْ كُمْ مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا ؕ ۸۳

(18-83) (O Muhammad), they ask you about Dhu al-Qarnayn. [61] Say: "I will give you an account of him." [62]

(61) It is quite obvious that the conjunction wao joins this story with the previous story of Khidr. Thus it is a selfevident proof that the previous two stories of the sleepers of the cave and Moses and Khidr were also related in answer to the queries of the disbelievers of Makkah who, in consultation with the people of the Book, had put these questions to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a test of his Prophethood.

(62) The identification of Zul-Qarnain has been a controversial matter from the earliest times. In general the commentators have been of the opinion that he was Alexander the Great but the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain described in the Quran are not applicable to him. However, now the commentators are inclined to believe that Zul- Qarnain was Cyrus, an ancient king of Iran. We are also of the opinion that probably Zul-Qarnain was Cyrus, but the historical facts, which have come to light up to this time, are not sufficient to make any categorical assertion.

Now let us consider the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain in the light of his story as given in the Quran.

(1) The title Zul-Qarnain (the two-horned) should have been quite familiar to the Jews, for it was at their instigation that the disbelievers of Makkah put this question to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Therefore we must turn to the Jewish literature in order to learn who was the person known as the two-horned or which was the kingdom known as the two-horned.

(2) Zul-Qarnain must have been a great ruler and a great conqueror whose conquests might have spread from the east to the west and on the third side to the north or to the south. Before the revelation of the Quran there had been several persons who were such great conquerors. So we must confine our research for the other characteristics of Zul-Qarnain to one of these persons.

(3) This title should be applicable to such a ruler who might have constructed a strong wall across a mountain pass to protect his kingdom from the incursions of Gog and Magog. In order to investigate this thing, we will have to determine as to who were Gog and Magog. We will also have to find out when such a wall was built and by whom and to which territory it was adjacent.

(4) Besides possessing the above mentioned characteristics, he should also be a God-worshiper and a just ruler, for the Quran has brought into prominence these characteristics more than anything else.

The first of these characteristics is easily applicable to Cyrus, for according to the Bible, Prophet Daniel saw in his vision that the united kingdom of Media and Persia was like a two-horned ram before the rise of the Greeks. (Dan. 8: 3, 20). The Jews had a very high opinion of the twohorned one, because it was his invasion which brought about the downfall of the kingdom of Babylon and the liberation of the Israelites Please also refer to (E.N. 8 of Surah Al-Isra).

The second characteristic is applicable to him to a great extent but not completely. Though his conquests spread to Syria and Asia Minor in the West and to Bakhtar (Balkh) in the East, there is no trace of any of his great expeditions to the North or to the South, whereas the Quran makes an explicit mention of his third expedition. Nevertheless, this third expedition is not wholly out of question for history tells us that his kingdom extended to Caucasia in the North. As regards to Gog and Magog, it has been nearly established that they were the wild tribes of Central Asia who were known by different names: Tartars, Mongols, Huns and Scythians, who had been making inroads on settled kingdoms and empires from very ancient times. It is also known that strong bulwarks had been built in southern regions of Caucasia, though it has not been as yet historically established that these were built by Cyrus.

As regards to the last characteristic, Cyrus is the only known conqueror among the ancient rulers, to whom this may be

applicable, for even his enemies have been full of praise for him for his justice, and, Ezra, a book of the Bible, asserts that he was a God worshiper and a God fearing king who set free the Israelites because of his God worship, and ordered that the Temple of Solomon should be rebuilt for the worship of Allah, Who has no partner.

In the light of the above, we admit that of all the conquerors, who had passed away before the revelation of the Quran, Cyrus alone is the one to whom the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain are most applicable, but we need more evidence to determine specifically that Cyrus is definitely Zul-Qarnain. Anyhow, there is no other conqueror to whom the characteristics stated in the Quran are as much applicable as to Cyrus.

Historically, it is enough to say that Cyrus was a Persian ruler, whose rise began about 549 B.C. In a few years, he conquered the kingdom of Media and Lydia and afterwards conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. After this no powerful kingdom was left to oppose him. His conquests extended to Sind and the territory known as Turkistan on one side, and to Egypt and Libya and to Thrace and Macedonia and to Caucasia and Khawarzam in the North. In fact, the whole civilized world was under his sway.

اِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَ ۚ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَاٰتَیْنٰ ہُ مِ کُلِّ شَیْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿۸۴﴾

(18-84) We granted him power in the land and endowed him with all kinds of resources.

فَاَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿۸۵﴾

(18-85) He set out (westwards) on an expedition,

حَتّٰۤی اِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَ ہَا تَغْرُبُ فِیْ عَیْنٍ حَمِئَۃٍ وَّوَجَدَ عِنْدَہَا قَوْمًا ؕ قُلْنَا یٰذَا الْقَرْنَیْنِ اِمَّاۤ اَنْ تُعَذِّبَ وَ اِمَّاۤ اَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِیْہِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿۸۶﴾

(18-86) until when he reached the very limits where the sun sets, (63) he saw it setting in dark turbid waters; (64) and nearby

he met a people. We said: "O Dhu al-Qarnayn, you have the power to punish or to treat them with kindness." (65)

(63) “The setting place of the sun” does not mean the place of the setting of the sun. According to Ibn Kathir, it means that he marched to the west conquering one country after the other till he reached the last boundary of the land, beyond which there was ocean.

(64) “He found it setting in a muddy spring”: If Zul Qarnain was Cyrus, then that place would be the western limit of Asia Minor and the black waters would be the Aegean Sea. This interpretation is supported by the use of the word ain instead of bahr in the Quran.

(65) “We said” does not necessarily mean that Allah directly revealed to him these words, and that Zul-Qarnain was a Prophet or was the one who received inspiration from Allah, and the same is the reasonable conjecture. This concerns the time when Zul-Qarnain had taken possession of the land as a conqueror and the conquered people were utterly at your mercy. Then Allah posed a question before his conscience, as if to say: Now is the time of your trial. These people are utterly at your mercy, and you have the option either to behave unjustly towards them or to treat them generously.

قَالَ اَمَّا مَنۡ ظَلَمَ فَسَوۡفَ نُعَذِّبُهٗ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ فَيُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا نُّكۡرًا ۸۷

(18-87) He said: "We will chastise him who does wrong, whereafter he will be returned to his Lord and He will chastise him grievously.

وَ اَمَّا مَنۡ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهٗ جَزَآءَ الۡحُسۡنٰى وَ سَنَقُوۡلُ لَهٗ مِنۡ اَمۡرِنَا يُسۡرًا ۸۸

(18-88) But as for him who believes and acts righteously, his will be a goodly reward and we shall enjoin upon him only mild commands."

ثُمَّ اَتۡبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٩﴾

(18-89) Then he set out on another expedition

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَطۡلِعَ الشَّمۡسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطۡلُعُ عَلٰى قَوۡمٍ لَّمۡ نَجۡعَلۡ لَّهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهَا سِتۡرًا ﴿٩٠﴾

(18:90) until he reached the limit where the sun rises and he found it rising on a people whom We had provided no shelter from it. (66)

(66) That is, when he advanced towards the east, conquering one country after the other, he reached a territory where the limits of the civilized world had come to an end and beyond which was the territory of barbaric people, who had no shelter at all of tents or buildings."

كَذٰلِكَ ۛ وَقَدۡ اَحَطۡنَا بِمَا لَدَيۡهِ خُبۡرًا ﴿٩١﴾

(18-91) Thus was the state of those people, and We encompassed in knowledge all concerning Dhu al- Qarnayn.

ثُمَّ اَتۡبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٩٢﴾

(18-92) Then he set out on another expedition

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغَ بَيۡنَ السَّدَّيۡنِ وَجَدَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهِمَا قَوۡمًا لَّا يَكَادُوۡنَ يَفۡقَهُوۡنَ قَوۡلًا ﴿٩٣﴾

(18-93) until when he reached a place between the two mountains, (67) he found beside the mountains a people who scarcely understood anything. (68)

(67) The "two mountains" must have been parts of that mountain range which runs between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea as stated in (Ayat 96). This must be so because beyond them was the territory of Gog and Magog.

(68) That is, it was difficult to communicate with them: their language was almost foreign to Zul-Qarnain and his companions, and, as they were quite barbaric, none could understand their language, nor were they acquainted with any foreign language.

قَالُوْا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِنَّ يَاْجُوْجَ وَمَاْجُوْجَ مُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَّجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلٰٓى اَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾

(18-94) They said: "O Dhu al-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog (69) are spreading corruption in this land. So shall we pay you taxes on the understanding that you will set up a barrier between us and them?"

(69) As has already been pointed out in (E.N. 62), Gog and Magog were the wild tribes of North Eastern Asia which, from the very early times had been making inroads on settled kingdoms and empires in Asia and Europe and ravaging them. According to Genesis (Chapter 10), they were the descendants of Japheth, the son of Noah, and the Muslim historians have also accepted this. And according to the book of Ezekiel (Chapters 38, 39), they inhabited the territories of Meshech (Moscow) and Tubal (Tubalsek). According to the Israelite historian Josephus, they were the Scythians and their territory spread to the north and the east of the Black Sea. According to Jerome, Magog inhabited the territory to the north of Caucasia near the Caspian Sea.

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّىْ فِيْهِ رَبِّىْ خَيْرٌ فَاَعِيْنُوْنِىْ بِقُوَّةٍ اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾

(18-95) He answered: "Whatever my Lord has granted me is good enough. But help me with your labour and I will erect a rampart between you and them. (70)

(70) That is, as a ruler it is my duty to protect you from the ravages of your enemies: therefore it is not lawful for me to levy any extra taxes on you for this purpose. The treasury that Allah has placed in my custody suffices for this purpose. You shall, however, have to help me with your manual labor.

اٰتُوْنِیْ زُبَرَ الْحَدِیْدِ ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا سَاوٰی بَیْنَ الصَّدَفَیْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوْا ؕ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا جَعَلَهٗ نَارًا ۙ قَالَ اٰتُوْنِیْۤ اُفْرِغْ عَلَیْهِ قِطْرًا ؕ ۹۶

(18-96) Bring me ingots of iron." Then after he had filled up the space between the two mountain-sides, he said: "(Light a fire) and ply bellows." When he had made it (red like) fire, he said: "Bring me molten copper which I may pour on it."

فَمَا اسْطَاعُوْۤا اَنْ یَّظْهَرُوْهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا لَهٗ نَقْبًا ؕ ۹۷

(18-97) Such was the rampart that Gog and Magog could not scale, nor could they pierce it.

قَالَ هٰذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّیْ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّیْ جَعَلَهٗ دَكَّآءَ ۚ وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّیْ حَقًّا ؕ ۹۸

(18-98) Dhu al-Qarnayn said: "This is a mercy from my Lord: but when the time of my Lord's promise shall come, He will level the rampart with the ground. (71) My Lord's promise always comes true." (72)

(71) That is, though I have built a very strong iron wall, as far as it was possible for me, it is not ever lasting, for it will last only as long as Allah wills, and will fall down to pieces when the time of my Lord’s promise shall come. Then no power in the world shall be able to keep it safe and secure.
As regards to the time of Allah’s promise, it has two meanings. (1) It may mean the time of the destruction of the wall. (2) It may also mean the time of the death and destruction of everything destined by Allah at the end of the world i.e. the Hour of Resurrection.

Some people have entertained the misunderstanding that the wall attributed here to Zul-Qarnain refers to the famous wall of China, whereas this wall was built between Derbent and Daryal, two cities of Daghestan in the Caucasus, the land that lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian. There are high mountains between the Black Sea and Daryal having deep gorges which cannot allow large armies to pass through them. Between

Derbent and Daryal, however, there are no such mountains and the passes also are wide and passable. In ancient times savage hordes from the north invaded and ravaged southern lands through these passes and the Persian rulers who were scared of them had to build a strong wall, 50 miles long, 29 feet high and 10 feet wide, for fortification purposes, ruins of which can still be seen. Though it has not yet been established historically who built this wall in the beginning, the Muslim historians and geographers assign it to Zul-Qarnain because its remains correspond with the description of it given in the Quran. Ibn Jarir Tabari and Ibn Kathir have recorded the event, and Yaqut has mentioned it in his Mu jam-ul-Buldan that when after the conquest of Azerbaijan, Umar sent Suraqah bin Amr, in 22 A.H. on an expedition to Derbent, the latter appointed Abdur Rehman bin Rabiah as the chief of his vanguard. When Abdur Rehman entered Armenia, the ruler Shehrbraz surrendered without fighting. Then when Abdur Rehman wanted to advance towards Derbent, Shehrbraz informed him that he had already gathered full information about the wall built by Zul-Qarnain, through a man, who could supply all the necessary details and then the man was actually presented before Abdur Rehman. (Tabari, Vol. III, pp. 235-239; AlBidayah wan-Nihayah, Vol. VII, pp. 122-125, and Mujamul- Buldan, under Bab-ul-Abwab: Derbent).

Two hundred years later, the Abbasid Caliph Wathiq (227- 233 A.H.) dispatched a party of 50 men under Sallam-ul-Tarjuman to study the wall of Zul-Qarnain, whose observations have been recorded in great detail by Yaqut in Mujam-ul-Buldan and by Ibn Kathir in Al-Bidayah. They write that this expedition reached Samarrah from where they reached Tiflis (the present Tbilisi) and then through As-Sarir and Al-Lan, they reached Filanshah, from where they entered the Caspian territory. From there they arrived at Derbent and saw the wall. (AlBidayah Vol. II, p. 111, Vol. VII, pp. 122-125; Mujam-ul-Buldan: under BabulAbwab). This clearly shows that even up till the third century of Hijrah the Muslim scholars regarded this wall of the Caucasus as the wall of Zul-Qarnain.

Yaqut in his Mujam-ul-Buldan has further confirmed the same view at a number of places. For instance, under Khazar (Caspian) he writes:

This territory belongs to the Turks, which adjoins the wall of Zul Qarnain just behind Bab-ul-Abwab, which is also called Derbent. In the same connection, he records a report by Ahmad bin Fadlan, the ambassador of Caliph Al- Muqtadar-billah, who has given a full description of the Caspian land, saying that Caspian is the name of a country whose capital is Itil (near the present Astrakhan) right through which flows River Itil, which joins the Caspian from Russia and Bulghar.

Regarding Bab-ul-Abwab he says that this city is called both Al-Bab and Derbent, which is a highly difficult passage for the people coming from the northern lands towards the south. Once this territory was a part of the kingdom of Nausherwan, and the Persian rulers paid particular attention to strengthening their frontiers on that side.

(72) Here the story of Zul-Qarnain comes to an end. Though this story has been related in answer to the questions put by the disbelievers of Makkah as a test along with the stories of the sleepers of the cave and Moses and Khidr, the Quran has utilized this story, too, for its own aim and object, as if to say: Zul Qarnain, about whose glory you have heard from the people of the Book, was not merely a conqueror, but also a believer of the doctrines of Tauhid and the life after death and acted upon the principles of justice and generosity. He was not a mean person like you who have been puffed up by the possession of petty estates, and give yourselves airs of superiority.

وَ تَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّمُوْجُ فِيْ بَعْضٍ وَّ نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَجَمَعْنٰهُمْ جَمْعًا ۙ ٩٩

(18-99) And on that Day (73) We shall let some of them surge like waves against others, and the Trumpet shall be blown. Then We shall gather them all together.

(73) “That Day”: “The Day of Resurrection”. As if to continue the theme of life after death to which Zul-Qarnain referred as the time of my Lord’s promise, the Quran has added (Verses 99-101) to it.

وَّ عَرَضْنَا جَ ۨنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْكٰفِرِ ۙ نَ عَرْضَا ۙ ١٠٠

(18-100) That will be the Day We shall place Hell before the unbelievers

الَّذِيْ ۙنَ كَانَتْ اَعْيُنُهُمْ فِيْ غِطَآءٍ عَ ذِكْرِيْ وَكَانُوْا لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَمْعًا ١٠١ ؕ

(18-101) whose eyes had become blind against My admonition and who were utterly disinclined to hear it.

اَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا عِبَادِيْ مِنْ دُوْنِيْٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نُزُلًا ١٠٢ ۚ

(18-102) Do the unbelievers, (74) then, believe that they can take any of My creatures as their guardians beside Me? (75) Verily We have prepared Hell to welcome the unbelievers.

(74) This is the conclusion of the whole Surah and is not connected with the story of Zul-Qarnain only but with the subject matter of this Surah as a whole. That theme was enunciated at the beginning of the (Surah Ayats 1-8): The Prophet (peace be upon him) invited his people. (1) To give up shirk and adopt the doctrine of Tauhid instead. (2) To give up the worship of the world and to believe in the life of the Hereafter. But the chiefs of his people, who were puffed up with their wealth and grandeur, not only rejected his invitation but also persecuted and insulted those righteous people who had accepted his invitation. The discourse deals with the same themes and utilizes in an excellent manner the three stories which were related in answer to the questions put by the opponents of Islam as a test of his Prophethood.

(75) That is, do they still stick to their presumption even after hearing all this and believe that their attitude will be profitable for them?

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْاَخْسَرِيْنَ اَعْمٰلًا ١٠٣ ؕ

(18-103) Say, (O Muhammad): "Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in respect of their works?

اَلَّذِيۡنَ ضَلَّ سَعۡيُهُمۡ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا وَهُمۡ يَحۡسَبُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ يُحۡسِنُوۡنَ صُنۡعًا ۝١٠٤

(18-104) It will be those whose effort went astray (76) in the life of the world and who believe nevertheless that they are doing good.

(76) This verse has two meanings. The one is the same that we have adopted in the translation. The other meaning is this: Those who confined all their endeavors to the worldly life. That is, whatever they did, they did for this world without paying any regard to God and the Hereafter. As they considered the worldly life to be the real life, they made the success and prosperity in this world their sole aim and object. Even if they professed the existence of Allah, they never paid any heed to the two implications of this profession: to lead their lives in a way to please Allah and to come out successful on the Day they shall have to render an account of what they did in this world. This was because they considered themselves to be mere rational animals who were absolutely independent and free from every kind of responsibility and had nothing else to do but to enjoy the good things of the world like animals in a meadow.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَلِقَآئِهٖ فَحَبِطَتۡ اَعۡمَالُهُمۡ فَلَا نُقِيۡمُ لَهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَزۡنًا ۝١٠٥

(18-105) Those are the ones who refused to believe in the revelations of their Lord and that they are bound to meet Him. Hence, all their deeds have come to naught, and We shall assign no weight to them on the Day of Resurrection. (77)

(77) “So worthless will be their deeds” in the sense that they will be of no avail to them in the life after death, even though they might have considered them as their great achievements but the fact is that they will lose all their value as soon as the world shall come to an end. When they will go before their Lord, and all

their deeds shall be placed in the scales, they will have no weight at all whether they had built great palaces, established great universities and libraries, set up great factories and laboratories, constructed highways and railways, in short, all their inventions, industries, sciences and arts and other things of which they were very proud in this world, will lose their weights in the scales. The only thing which will have weight there will be that which had been done in accordance with the divine instructions and with the intention to please Allah. It is, therefore, obvious that if all of one's endeavors were confined to the worldly things and the achievement of worldly desires whose results one would see in this world, one should not reasonably expect to see their results in the Hereafter, for they would have gone waste with the end of this world. It is equally obvious, that only the deeds of the one, who performed them strictly in accordance with His instructions to win His approval with a view to avail of their results in the Hereafter, will find that his deeds had weight in the scales. On the contrary, such a one will find that all his endeavors in the world had gone waste.

ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوْا وَاتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِيْ وَرُسُلِيْ هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

(18-106) Hell is their recompense for disbelieving and their taking My revelations and My Messengers as objects of jest.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

(18-107) As for those who believe and do good works, the Gardens of Paradise shall be there to welcome them;

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا لَا يَبْغُوْنَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

(18-108) there they will abide for ever, with no desire to be removed from there." (78)

(78) "No desire will they have to be removed there from" because they will find no place and no condition better than those in Paradise.

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّیْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّیْ وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا ﴿۱۰۹﴾

(18-109) Say: "If the sea were to become ink to record the Words (79) of my Lord, indeed the sea would be all used up before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, and it would be the same even if We were to bring an equal amount of ink."

(79) By “words” are meant the marvelous works, the excellences and the wonders of His Power and Wisdom.

قُلْ اِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ یُوْحٰۤی اِلَیَّ اَنَّمَاۤ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَمَنْ كَانَ یَرْجُوْا لِقَآءَ رَبِّهٖ فَلْیَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صٰلِحًا وَّ لَا یُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهٖۤ اَحَدًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾

(18-110) Say (O Muhammad): "I am no more than a human being like you; one to whom revelation is made: 'Your Lord is the One and Only God.' Hence, whoever looks forward to meet his Lord, let him do righteous works, and let him associate none with the worship of his Lord."